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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/801,571	03/17/2004	Aelan Mosden	247563US6YA	2738

22850 7590 03/10/2006

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EXAMINER

BARRECA, NICOLE M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1756

DATE MAILED: 03/10/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/801,571	MOSDEN ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Nicole M. Barreca	1756	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 December 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 and 21-32 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9, 21-32 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-9 and 21-32 are pending in this application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1, 2, 4-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sachdev (US 4,493,855).

4. A blanket layer of an organic polymer 6 (thin film) is deposited over substrate 1. A blanket layer of a plasma polymerized organosilicon film 7 (hard mask) is deposited, followed by a layer of a photo, x-ray or e-beam resist 8 (light-sensitive). The resist is exposed and developed and then used as a mask for etching of the plasma polymerized layer 7. The resist layer 8 can be removed during the etching of the polymer layer 6 in oxygen. The plasma polymerized organosilicon layer 7 is treated in an oxygen plasma, such as a conventional oxygen plasma resist asher. The oxygen plasma converts the surface and adjacent surface of the film into an etching barrier. See col.5, 15-31 and col.6, 10-col.7, 53. The reference teaches that the oxygen plasma converts the surface and adjacent surface of the (patterned) organosilicon layer 7 into an etching barrier but is silent on the depth and does not disclose altering the surface layer to a depth of at least 10 angstroms. However it is known by those of ordinary skill in the art that the amount of conversion of the surface would be dependent on the conditions in which the

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layer was exposed to the oxygen plasma, including exposure time, temperature and oxygen concentration, thereby establishing the altered surface depth as a result effective variable. It would within the ordinary skill of one in the art to determine the optimal altered surface depth by routine experimentation and have a depth of at least 10 angstroms, if required, because the depth is a result-effective variable dependent on the conditions of oxygen plasma exposure and the discovery of an optimum value of a result effective variable is ordinary within the skill of the art, as taught by *In re Boesch*, (617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980)).

5. Claims 1, 4-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stojakovic (US 2005/0051820).

6. A stack of initial layers including a photoresist, ARC layer, hard mask and MTJ stack (thin film) are formed on an underlying layer. The hard mask is etched to form a pattern and the photoresist and ARC layers are stripped using a resist strip plasma including oxygen. As the surface of the hard mask is exposed to plasma it undergoes plasma oxidation. If needed the over etch time of the resist strip plasma may be extended to provide a thicker surface oxide. After forming the surface oxide 80 on the hard mask layer the MTJ stack 29 is etched. See also [0038]-[0042]. Table 1 discloses an etch time of 120 seconds for the resist strip and hard mask plasma oxidation. The reference teaches that a surface oxide is formed on the hard mask prior to its use as an etching mask but is silent on the depth and does not disclose altering the surface layer to a depth of at least 10 angstroms. The reference however does teach that the over etch time of the resist strip plasma may be extended if a thicker oxide surface is

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required, thereby establishing the altered surface depth as a result effective variable. It would within the ordinary skill of one in the art to determine the optimal altered surface depth by routine experimentation and have a depth of at least 10 angstroms, if required, because the depth is a result-effective variable dependent on the conditions of oxygen plasma exposure such as exposure time and the discovery of an optimum value of a result effective variable is ordinary within the skill of the art, as taught by *In re Boesch*, (617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980)).

7. Claims 1, 3-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Angelopoulos (US 6,316,167) in view of Masuyama (US 5,114,529).

8. A RCHX film is deposited over an oxide layer (thin film). R is selected from the group consisting of Si, Gem B, Sn, Fe Ti and combination thereof and X is not present or selected from the group of one or more of O, N, S and F. The RCHX layers are useful as hardmask, antireflection layers. The photoresist patterns are transferred into the RCHX film, after which the photoresist is ashed. The RCHX feature is transferred into the oxide layer. See abstract, col.14, 11-17. Angelopoulos is silent on conditions used to ash the photoresist layer. Masuyama teaches that photoresist ashing is typically performed by utilizing an oxygen plasma (col.1, 16-17). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the ashing of the photoresist in the method of Angelopoulos was performed using an oxygen plasma because Masuyama teaches that photoresist ashing is typically performed by utilizing an oxygen plasma. While references do not explicitly disclose that the surface of the RCHX is treated in the oxygen plasma, one of ordinary skill in the art would have to expect the RCHX surface

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was exposed to the oxygen plasma and therefore modified as patterned portions the RCHX surface were exposed to an oxygen plasma during the photoresist ashing. The reference does not disclose altering the surface layer to a depth of at least 10 angstroms. However it is known by those of ordinary skill in the art that the amount of conversion of the surface would be dependent on the conditions in which the layer was exposed to the oxygen plasma, including exposure time, temperature and oxygen concentration, thereby establishing the altered surface depth as a result effective variable. It would within the ordinary skill of one in the art to determine the optimal altered surface depth by routine experimentation and have a depth of at least 10 angstroms, if required, because the depth is a result-effective variable dependent on the conditions of oxygen plasma exposure and the discovery of an optimum value of a result effective variable is ordinary within the skill of the art, as taught by *In re Boesch*, (617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980)).

9. Claims 21-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stojakovic as applied to claims 1, 4 or 5 above, and further in view of Vyvoda (US 2003/0022526).

10. The teachings of Stojakovic have been discussed above. Stojakovic teaches forming an oxidized hard mask surface during the photoresist strip and that the over etch time of the resist strip process can be modified depending on the endpoint thickness of the oxide desired. The reference discloses an etch time of 120 seconds for the resist strip and hard mask plasma oxidation. The reference is silent on the temperature for the plasma oxidation and does not disclose a substrate temperature of

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approximately 20-400 C. Vyvoda teaches that plasma oxidation processes are typically carried out at temperatures below about 600 C [0005]. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use a substrate temperature below 600 C because Vyvoda teaches that this is a typical temperature for a plasma oxidation.

Response to Arguments

11. Applicant's arguments with respect to the claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. However since some of the same references have been used in the new rejections, relevant arguments will be addressed. The applicant argues that Sachdev discloses treatment of the organosilicon film only after etching of the thin film has been performed. However this not true. Sachdev teaches that the resist layer may be removed concurrently with the etching of the base layer in an oxygen ambient and that this oxygen ambient converts the surface of the organosilicon polymer film into a mixture of metal oxides which function as a RIE barrier. See col.5, 15-31 and col.7, 49-53. The applicant argues that Stojakovic removes the resist and ARC layer prior to etching of the multilayered structure. While this is true, it is not the ARC layer which is treated and altered but rather the hard mask. Stojakovic teaches as the surface of the hard mask is exposed to plasma it undergoes plasma oxidation and if needed the over etch time of the resist strip plasma may be extended to provide a thicker surface oxide. After forming the surface oxide 80 on the hard mask layer the MTJ stack 29 is etched. See [0038]-[0042].

12. In response to applicant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections

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are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

Conclusion

13. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

14. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Nicole M. Barreca whose telephone number is 571-272-1379. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday (9AM-7PM).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mark F. Huff can be reached on 571-272-1385. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Nicole M Barreca
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1756



3/5/06